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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BEAR – Barents Euro-Arctic Region

BEAC – Barents Euro-Arctic Council

BRC – Barents Regional Council

JWGC – Joint Working Group on Culture

JWGY – Joint Working Group on Youth

EU – European Union

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1. INTRODUCTION

From the end of the twentieth century up to these days, Russia underwent several transformations, including the image one, due to economic and political ups and downs. Each time, the strategy of Russia's Foreign Cultural Policy was adjusted or revised following the interests corresponding to that time's challenges. First of all, the construction of a national concept of foreign cultural policy depends on the political ideology adopted in a given society and on the prevailing ideas about the nature of cultural processes and the priority of solving cultural problems for the state. However, in each region where the interests of Russia are represented, such an approach is individual.

Activities in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region are part of Russia's Arctic policy. For Russia, the Arctic region's importance is primarily due to considerations of security and resource extraction (Heininen et al. 2014, 4). Indeed, today the Arctic is a promising region both economically and strategically. On the other hand, culture is a tool that makes it possible to expand and spread influence and maintain the country's image in the international arena, thereby earning favor concerning activities that are not related to culture.

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region is a regional association of territories around the Barents Sea. Its main idea is to develop international cooperation. Russia is one of the four participating countries pursuing its interests in this region. The BEAR embraces the territories of Finland (Oulu Region, Lapland, North Karelia, Kainuu), Sweden (Norrbotten, Västerbotten), Russia (Arkhangelsk, Karelia, Nenets, Komi, Murmansk) and Norway (Finnmark, Troms, Nordland).

One of the main goals of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (the leading institution for cross-border cooperation at the BEAR) is to preserve culture, seek communication through cultural projects and help in research projects. These goals are mentioned in various programs dedicated to the development of the BEAR in the culture field (Barents Voices 2003-2006, New Winds in the Barents Region 2008-2010, New Horizons in the Barents Region 2011-2013, Strategies for Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region 2014-2018 and Creative Barents 2019-2023).

Various cultural festivals related to cultural cooperation in the Barents Region are implemented annually in Russia. Of course, participation in any organization or regional collaboration is a way for the state to learn, increase the prestige internationally as well as to achieve and defend particular national interests.

1.1. Research Gap & Research Questions

The Arctic becomes a crucial topic in international relations today. In the current realities this direction is one of the most important places of a political struggle. Russia has its own ambitions, claims, and according to its position on the globe it has rights and preferences to use such a promising region as the Arctic. In this regard, the Euro-Arctic direction can be considered a uniquely located geostrategic and geo-economic base of Russia's interests and projects in the Arctic. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to find out:

What goals does Russia pursue by participating in and organizing cooperation in the Arctic region?

To achieve the goal, several additional questions were posed:

1. What is cultural cooperation for Russian foreign policy?
2. What is the reason for the existence of international cultural cooperation in the BEAR?
3. What is the role of Russia in cultural projects in the BEAR?
4. Has COVID-19 changed the position of Russia in the region?

1.2 Methodology and Data

In order to most fully answer the main research question, *a multiple case study* was used. The study chronologically lists the cultural and scientific projects in which Russia took part in one way or another. Five Barents Cultural programs were taken as cases for this thesis.

According to Florian Kohlbacher, “case studies seem to be the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions were posed, when the investigator had little control over events, and when the focus was on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context” (Kohlbacher 2006). In a multiple case study, the researcher

examined multiple cases to understand the differences and similarities between them (Baxter and Jack 2008, 25). According to Gustafsson, “an all-embracing fact was that the evidence created from a multiple case study were measured strong and reliable” (Gustafsson 2017, 3).

Case studies helped in a close and scrupulous examination of projects both at the institutional and local levels. This approach helped to look at things and analyze events realistically. Consequently, I used the program documents and declarations of Russia on cultural policy and the development of the Arctic regions and doctrines and program documents for the development of the BEAC to see the shift of Russia's official position within the BEAR.

The main research method was *qualitative content analysis*. The introduction of content analysis into political research is associated with the name of the American political scientist G. Lasswell, who first used this method when studying political leaders' speeches, educational and scientific literature of Germany and the Soviet Union in the 1920s – 1940s. The method's essence was to translate textual information into quantitative data, which was used in subsequent mathematical processing. First, the frequency of using keywords and phrases (semantic blocks) in the text is determined. Then the frequency of their use is calculated in relation to each other and to the total amount of information (Semyonova 2010, 103-104).

In contrast to quantitative analysis, qualitative content analysis is focused on the idiographic approach. It relies on an inductive method of obtaining knowledge, emphasizing the singularity of the phenomena under study, their ambiguity, and their complexity. The main difference between qualitative and quantitative content analysis is that quantitative analysis is focused on explaining the content, on the general principles of material analysis, on the search for the universal through analysis, decomposition of the text into its constituent parts, and analysis of these variables. The qualitative content analysis aims to understand the phenomena under study; to analyze the relations and processes between these phenomena; it is focused on covering the entire set and complexity of the studied phenomena and aims to

study isolated cases. Qualitative content analysis tasks are to formulate hypotheses, create new theories, deepen the material under study, classify and test these hypotheses and theories (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 65). German researcher Meiring believes that “Any recorded communication, including transcripts of interviews, documents, articles, can be the object of qualitative content analysis” and identifies five areas of application of qualitative content analysis:

- communication (content analysis itself);
- hermeneutics (as the art of interpretation);
- qualitative social research (interpretive paradigm);
- literary criticism and psychology (Mayring 2000). This analysis is implemented in the third chapter of the thesis.

Qualitative content analysis was chosen because the research was based on program documents, description of project activities, doctrines, and strategies of Russia, the BEAR, and the BEAC. Qualitative content analysis is applicable in studies that “pay attention to the content or the contextual meaning of the text” (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, 126-127).

Thus, the qualitative content analysis seems appropriate since it implies the complete analysis of texts. Working with qualitative content analysis traditionally amounts to “coding”. These are “methods for finding and identifying key ideas in data; similar grouping types of information by category” (Rubin and Rubin 2003, 65-66). A code is a word, a phrase that symbolically denotes the result or essence of the data (Saldana 2013, 3). However, it is vital to note that the coding depends solely on the interpretation of the author. Moreover, there are no strict rules as to which codes can be considered correct or not. Most importantly, the codes must correspond to the research questions. Mayring also speaks of encoding information (Mayring 1994). He introduces the key concepts of qualitative analysis:

1. Substantiation of the analyzed material (what material is the basis of the analysis?);
2. Analysis of the situation in the data under study (by whom and under what circumstances was this material obtained?);

3. Formal characteristics of the material (in what form is this material presented?);
4. Direction of analysis (what is at the center of the study?);
5. Theoretical substantiation (theoretical substantiation of the questions asked by the researcher);
6. Determination of analysis techniques and creation of an analysis model (analysis is carried out in specific steps, each of which can be checked and transferred to other objects under study);
7. Determination of units of analysis.
8. Analyzing by highlighting a system of categories:
9. Testing the categorical system based on theory and empirical material
10. Interpretation of the results
11. Reference to a previously developed reliability criterion.

In this thesis several paragraphs are of the main importance: the characteristics of the material, empirical material, and the interpretations of the results.

It can be noted that qualitative content analysis opens the way to theoretical and methodological qualitative data assessment. Its aim is to substantiate hypotheses and discover new theories. It is not focused on establishing individual factors but is aimed at constructing possible relations between various elements. A particular advantage of this method is that it allows one to harmoniously combine both qualitative and quantitative indicators. This method allowed to compare the frequencies and the content of the references to the BEAR in official documents of the Russian Federation. It helped to understand the level of importance of the cooperation for the Russian authorities. Besides, this method will enable one to see the text's hidden content, which is not openly mentioned in the text but is present. By systematically assessing the text's meaningful meaning, it becomes possible not to reduce the text-only analysis to quantitative indicators. As a result, a theoretical study of the problem being examined becomes possible. This allows a clearer view of the interaction between theory and empirical material. Categories arise from a

specific text and develop further in the process of their assessment. (Kirpikov 2018, 72).

For the research, two large categories that helped classify Russia's project activities in the region were used. The first was the division into the state level of initiatives and the regional one. The second was the projects' division, where Russia was a direct organizer or initiator of cultural, scientific, and educational activities or just its participant. These categories helped to define Russia's role in the BEAR, and therefore the purpose of its activities in the organization and the region.

There were three main approaches to qualitative content analysis: conventional content analysis, directed content analysis, and summative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, 67). In this work, a directed content analysis was mostly used. The guided content analysis focused on existing theory, which helped to create codes and categories in advance. This allowed predictions to be made considering the possibilities of category variation, the original coding scheme, and relations between codes. This approach was “referred to as deductive category application” (Mayring 2000, 81).

Directed content analysis was applied to study the actors and their goals in promoting regional cultural cooperation. Thus, subcategories appear in the existing categories of the participant/organizer. The first is an exclusively institutional state level of cultural communication; the second is genuine and not declared participation in local communities.

In this research, the following approach was followed. Firstly, I carefully studied Russia's official documents concerning foreign cultural policy, documents of the BEAC and the Barents Regional Council, paying particular attention to those related to cultural cooperation in the region and studying them using the qualitative content analysis process proposed by Mayring Philipp. The analysis of existing cultural and scientific projects in the BEAR was carried out the same way. In addition to studying the documentation, I analyzed articles, interviews, and feedback on events.

The comparison of those two categories was not the aim of the study itself but their analysis was essential for the understanding of the Russian policy in the region. The main assumption was that the regional/governmental level would show which part was mostly interested in the cooperation. Whereas the number of the organized projects would show the involvement into the cooperation.

Comparative method was also used during the research in order to find the evolution of Russian role in the programs of the BEAR.

1.3 Literature Review & Analysis of the Sources

Researchers have often turned to the problems of Russia's Arctic agenda, the place of the Barents Euro-Arctic region in it, and a large number of studies devoted to the foreign cultural policy of Russia. However, there are currently no studies dedicated to the place of Russia's cultural policy in achieving strategic goals in the Arctic and even in a particular region. There are several correspondent researches on the Arctic strategy of Russia and on Russian cultural policy.

The essence of the BEAR region from the Russian point of view was described in the book by Bulatov "The Barents Euro-Arctic Region: Past and Present". It consistently pictured not only the history of the Region but political changes between the states which occupied the BEAR (Bulatov, 2006). Although there is no research on the Russian place in the BEAR from the cultural point of view, Porcel in his book "International relations in the Barents region" explained the reasons for the cooperation and the struggles Russia experiences because of this cooperation (Porcel 2011). In 2016 the research "Euro-arctic region as Russia's Arctic policy vector" by Kurylev and Petrova was published in which there was a discussion on the place of Russia in the region concerning the rise of interest towards Arctic. Most of the researches on the BEAR in Russia are regional and explore only the political and military parts leaving cultural impact behind. In this case the works of Lev Vostriakov on the cultural cooperation in the BEAR are highly important. His works explore the varieties of cultural cooperation in Russia and performed by Russia. Unfortunately, there are no assessments of the Russian role in the cultural exchange.

In north countries the BEAR as a scientific issue is more popular. In 2016 the “Encyclopedia of the Barents Region” was issued. Currently it is the most complete base of knowledge about the Barents region. As for the Arctic strategies of different countries including Russia, many studies can be mentioned. Lassi Heininen’s research named “Arctic strategies and policies” which explains the position of Russia and its role in the Arctic from the political point of view is the most complete comparative analysis for today. (Heininen 2012). “Russian strategies in the Arctic: Avoiding a new Cold War” by Heininen, Yarovoy and Sergunin written in 2014 is a research that helps to understand Russian position in different areas in the Arctic.

The only research about the role of Russia and its cultural impact in the BEAR is “The role of Russia in regional councils a comparative study of neighborhood cooperation in the Baltic sea and Barents Euro-Arctic regions” by Oldberg written in 2014. The author suggests that difficulties in cultural cooperation are due to Russian special vision of the cultural influence from abroad (Oldberg 2014).

Contrary to the Russian cultural role in the Arctic, Russian cultural policy is well analyzed in analyzed in the works of many Russian authors. Foreign cultural policy of the USSR and Russia: a comparative analysis gives an understanding of an essence and changes of Russian cultural diplomacy. “Formation and evolution of Russia's foreign cultural policy” by Bogolyubova determines the stages Russian cultural policy has gone through. In “Foreign cultural policy of Russia: historical experience and problems of the modern period” is stated that “Issues of foreign cultural policy of Russia again acquired strategic importance” (Bogolyubova 2013, 146) and this idea is crucial for this thesis.

However, the primary sources of information for the thesis were Russia's official documents on foreign cultural policy, Russia's Arctic programs and programs of the BEAC, the BRC, The Joint Working Group on Culture (JWGC), numerous interviews and articles in the media.

Several documents determine the foreign cultural policy of Russia. In April 2000, the Concept of Foreign Cultural Policy was adopted. The document consists of eight sections reflecting a new look at the development of international cultural

cooperation in the country. According to the Concept, “cultural cooperation with foreign countries is one of the components in the system of foreign policy coordinates, along with economic and political interaction, and culture is one of the flexible, most effective levers in the complex mechanism of foreign policy” (Abstracts Foreign cultural policy of Russia - year 2000).

The Concept defined the cooperation forms and directions. It suggested that further development of cultural, scientific, educational cooperation is necessary, as well as cooperation in mass media, libraries and archives, sports, youth exchange programs and so on. The document also outlined the critical role of bilateral cooperation with the crucial partners being, among others, the CIS and Baltic countries. A good illustration of the Concept 2000 relevance can be found at the turn of 20-21st centuries, when there was a spike of activity in BEAR countries cultural cooperation that aligns with the document contents.

Large-scale cultural events in foreign countries are considered a good opportunity to spread culture and language of the organizing country, creating a positive public opinion of the country. Despite the effectiveness of such events, the Concept’s foreign cultural policy financing part was vague and unspecific, making the process of holding such events rather complicated. The research of the situation in the studied region at the time shows that for the most part, Russia was a country that didn’t direct finances to hold cultural events abroad, being more on a receiving side.

In February 2001, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs prepared a document entitled “The Main Directions of the Work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the Development of Cultural Relations between Russia and Foreign Countries”. It supplemented and clarified the main provisions of the “Concept of Russia's Foreign Cultural Policy - The year 2000” (The main directions of work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the development of cultural ties between Russia and foreign countries 2001).

The document defined the Russian Foreign Ministry cultural cooperation policy, stating the importance of cultural ties for the favorable public image of the

country. However, throughout the document one can trace a specific shift of focus from positive representation towards national interests realization, with the latter being outlined as related to the connection of diplomacy and culture in the history of Russia. Understanding this shift is crucial in the context of the research.

The problems of Russia's international cooperation are defined in the 2008 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation. International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights are presented in the Russian Federation's Priorities in Solving Global Problems section, which undoubtedly confirms the high importance of the cultural factor in the country's foreign policy. The Concept pays special attention to Russia's activities aimed at “protecting the rights and legitimate interests of Russian citizens and compatriots in expanding and strengthening the space of the Russian language and culture, preserving the ethnocultural identity of the Russian diaspora and its connection with the historical homeland” (Concept of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 2008). However, the problem of insufficiently precise definitions and formulations regarding the financing of cultural policy remained. The content of the document is different from the “Concept of Foreign Cultural Policy of 2000”. The revision of 2008 already uses the concept of “soft power” directly, and it is applied in practice.

In 2010, the following document was approved, complementing the scope of Russia's foreign cultural policy. Within the framework of the “Main directions of the policy of the Russian Federation in the field of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation” cooperation was recognized as “an integral part of the policy of the Russian state in the world arena” (Main directions of the policy of the Russian Federation in the field of international cultural and humanitarian cooperation). This fact is important in the context of the multitasking of Russian politics, since a separate and so precise definition made it possible to maintain Russia's contribution to international cultural exchange. Cultural diplomacy is seen as an important tool for strengthening the country's international authority. Thus, in the dissertation, cultural diplomacy is used as part of Russia's soft power, which is also used in the region under study.

The 2013 Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation confirms the continuity of Russia's foreign policy in all key areas. International humanitarian cooperation is discussed in the section “Priorities of the Russian Federation in solving global problems”, which confirms the belief that the use of culture to achieve goals in the international arena is a priority for Russia. (Concept of foreign policy of the Russian Federation 2013). Cultural activities were aimed at creating a positive image of Russia abroad. The document showed the need to improve the system of using “soft power”, which is understood as “a comprehensive toolkit for solving foreign policy problems based on the capabilities of civil society, information and communication, humanitarian and other methods and technologies, alternative to classical diplomacy” (Sovetnikova 2014, 153-155). However, as in the previous edition, the document under consideration does not spell out a clear mechanism for financing the international cultural activities of the Russian state, which, of course, remains the main problem that hinders the holding of large-scale cultural events.

The 2016 Russian Foreign Policy Concept has changed a lot from the 2013 model. In the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept, issues related to the sphere of culture are given, in general, much more attention than in previously adopted similar documents. So, as an objective factor to be considered, the growth of the diversity of cultures and civilizations globally, the multiplicity of development models is noted, the priority of preventing inter-civilizational faults, the formation of intercultural and inter-civilizational partnership is substantiated. It is noted that Russia, as a multinational and multi-confessional state with centuries-old experience of harmonious coexistence of different peoples, consistently advocates a decrease in the role of the factor of force in international relations while simultaneously strengthening strategic and regional stability. (Foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation 2016). In this edition, state tasks in the international cultural sphere were determined. For example, to the important tasks are added: “the development of interstate cultural and humanitarian ties of the Slavic peoples; work to create a positive image of Russia, guided by the authority of its culture, education, science and sports, the level of development of civil society and many others” (Ibid.).

Simultaneously, clause 71 of the “Regional priorities of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation” separately indicates the importance of cooperation between the countries of the “Northern Dimension”, which includes the studied region. Unfortunately, the document no longer mentions scientific and cultural cooperation in general as a priority, but indigenous peoples' environmental aspects and interests are now a priority. In general, this fully corresponds to the position of Russia in the BEAR and in the region itself since 2016, when a decline in cultural cooperation is already noticeable in terms of creative teams, scientific research, exchanges, and projects to preserve the identity of the peoples inhabiting the Barents region come to the fore. This also indirectly shows the beginning of Russia's closeness from Western colleagues and the desire to strengthen the protection of the country's national interests, rather than the development of free exchange of information and culture. “Russia believes that the Arctic states bear a special responsibility for the sustainable development of the region, and in this regard, stands for strengthening interaction in the format of the Arctic Council, the Arctic coastal five, as well as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Russia will firmly oppose any attempts to bring elements of a policy of confrontation and military confrontation to the Arctic, politicize international interaction in the region” (Ibid.).

The next essential sources that made it possible to determine Russia's goals in the Arctic region, to which the Barents region belongs, are the Arctic strategies of the Russian Federation.

On September 18, 2009, President Medvedev approved the Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the Period up to 2020 and Beyond. This six-page document lists Russia's national interests in the region: developing Arctic resources, using the Northern Sea Route as a national unified transport communication, and preserving the Arctic as a zone of peace and cooperation. It focuses on the strategic importance of the Arctic for Russia (Fundamentals of the state policy of the Russian Federation in the Arctic for the period up to 2020 and beyond).

On February 20, 2013, President Vladimir Putin approved a document entitled “Development Strategy for the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation”. It should be noted that this document cannot be considered a comprehensive Russian doctrine regarding the Arctic. It covers only the Russian Arctic and not the Arctic region as a whole. In this sense, it can be put in line with the Canadian and Norwegian strategies to develop the northern territories. The 2013 Strategy also has international dimensions, including, for example, the position in which Russia indicates the need for international cooperation in such areas as exploration and development of natural resources, environmental protection, preservation of traditional lifestyles, and ensuring the ethnocultural development of the indigenous population of the Arctic. I consider it important to note that it follows from the document that Russia does not have the resources and technologies for independent development of the Russian Arctic's natural resources. For the development of the Far North, it needs foreign investment and high technologies. Of course, cultural cooperation in the Arctic strategy appears indirectly; however, even in an internal document, the need for foreign investment at the first stages of implementing the Arctic agenda shows the importance of communication with foreign colleagues. The 2013 Concept does not pay special attention to Russia's national interests in the Arctic, but it can be concluded that they do not differ from the national interests set in 2009 (Ibid.).

As shown by the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the Period up to 2035, adopted in October 2020, the policy is being refined in certain areas. This also applies to the region under study and directly to cultural communication. The document has some interesting intersections with the 2016 Concept. For example, as already mentioned, in the 2016 Foreign Cultural Policy Concept, an important place was allocated to indigenous peoples and their place in international scientific and cultural exchanges. The 2020 Strategy confirms this thesis and highlights not the inhabitants of the Arctic zone but the representatives of the indigenous minorities. This is also declared as one of the main directions in ensuring the

effective work of the Arctic Council under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation in 2021-2023: "... promoting joint projects, including those aimed at ensuring sustainable development of the Arctic and preserving the cultural heritage of indigenous peoples" (Presidential decree On the Strategy for the Development of the Arctic Zone of the Russian Federation and Ensuring National Security for the Period up to 2035, 2020).

In the 2020 Strategy, a little attention was paid to cultural cooperation between the Arctic countries. It declared support and assistance in strengthening ties between indigenous peoples living in the Arctic zone and indigenous peoples living in foreign states' Arctic territories. It also held relevant international forums, and the main emphasis was on educational, humanitarian, and cultural exchanges with young people from other Arctic states (Ibid.). At the same time, there was no mention of the separate status or special significance of the Barents region or its inhabitants, which showed that it was not the highest priority in the context of the Russian Arctic agenda.

Thanks to the Concepts of Russia's Foreign Policy and its Arctic Strategies, it was possible to trace what goals Russia pursues at the state level in the Arctic regions, including the Barents region. The mention of the Council of the Barents Region in the mid-2000s and its subsequent exclusion from the program documents showed a change in the landmarks of Russia and its national interests even in the context of cultural cooperation, and the reorientation of humanitarian cooperation from universal (residents of the region) to specialized (only indigenous peoples) indicated the beginning of a certain closedness of the exchange of cultural information, unwillingness to large-scale cooperation, exchange of information and the possibility of constructing a common identity of the region based on culture.

1.4 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and references. The research questions and a brief overview of the theme are given in the introduction, as well as the description of methodology and a literature review.

The second chapter describes the theoretical basis of the research, refers to the definition of «soft power» and “cultural diplomacy”. This chapter defines the role of foreign cultural cooperation in Russia.

The third chapter is the case study. It divides the parts according to the decades and Cultural programs executed during this period. The first section is devoted to the creation of the Barents cooperation and the role of Russia in it. In the second one, I describe the first three Cultural programs of the Barents region and define Russia's transitional role in the cooperation. The third one is about the turning point in Russian foreign policy and its current state.

The fourth chapter is a futurological discussion that presents two possible scenarios of the Barents region's events after the COVID-19.

The final part of the study is the conclusion, which summarizes the results of the work. There is also a list of sources and literature used in the text.

2. THEORETICAL SUBSTANTIATION OF RUSSIA'S POSITION IN FOREIGN CULTURAL POLICY

The Barents Euro-Arctic Region is among the economically developed regions. A unique culture develops in the region as well as local traditions are carefully preserved. The cooperation of the countries which belong to this region is long-term and productive. In this case, I should explain what I mean by using the term “region”. John A. Agnew noted that international relations researchers often use the term “region” either to “group of nations that appear to be similar and thus simplify greater complexity” or to place research IR to a “meso-regional area” that is larger than national and more diminutive than international (Agnew 2013, 6). Thus, in the BEAR case, we are dealing with an association on a territorial basis, which can develop into an association with a constructed identity, including through cultural communication. The Russian Federation is contributing to the development of these relations. It is one of many actors of the region which creates the region's general cultural policy by applying its cultural strategies and forms the representation in this political arena for non-cultural steps.

In order to explain the position of the Russian Federation on issues of cultural cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, I will consider this thesis from the standpoint of «soft power» and goals which the Russian Federation pursues by implementing soft power to protect its national interests. Another essential theoretical framework is cultural diplomacy and its implementation in terms of Russian External Cultural Policy.

2.1 The understanding of Soft power in Russia and its protection of national interests

The concept of soft power appeared, among other things, due to the beginning of the information age (Nye J. 1990, 23). This happened due to the blurring of boundaries between domestic and foreign policy of the state. This has become a natural consequence of globalization. J. Nye suggested considering the resources available in the arsenal of "soft power" when shaping the foreign policy course. He

believed that a positive image, states can win over others, can be a more effective instrument of influence than "hard power" associated with the use of military force and instruments of coercion (Nye J. 2004, 23).

In this case, soft power is expressed in “the ability to achieve what we want to be based on the voluntary participation of allies, and not through coercion and handouts” (Ibid., 15). According to the author, the first most crucial resource of states is culture; the second is a set of political values; the third is the state's foreign policy (Ibid., 11). As the researcher Korotina notes, these are all those numerous intangible assets that can increase the attractiveness of a country in the eyes of the rest of the world and expand the possibilities of their owner to influence and promote their interests (Korotina 2014, 50).

From the moment of its first use to the present day, the concept of soft power has undergone some changes. It happened mainly due to the fact that scientists could not single out the definition that would satisfy everyone. Matveenکو and Galayeva claim that in the modern world, soft power can be considered a special kind of management policy, which is aimed at using non-violent methods of influence, tools, and technology to achieve their geostrategic goals (Matveenکو and Galaeva 2015, 52). On the other hand, Soft power is one of the forms of the state's foreign policy strategy, as well as a complex mechanism of influence through a system of “attractive preferences” a set of political, technological techniques, methods and means” (Budaev, 2014, 15). Former head of the Federal Agency Rossotrudnichestvo understood soft power as “civil society, its institutions, and structures that are also capable of shaping the foreign policy of the state” (Kosachev, K. 2015).

Following J. Nye's concept, “soft power has two sources - internal (the attractiveness of the model of the country's socio-economic development) and external (the instruments of “soft power” of the state are addressed to other countries and have an impact on public opinion)” (Nye J. 2004, 13). Politics' success was ensured only when “behind the back of American diplomacy there was the shadow of the US and NATO armed forces” as it was noted by Sicherman (Sicherman 1997,

13-14). Later this opinion was supplemented by Ferguson. He compared “soft power” with imperialism, which can only be driven by “hard power”. He believed that the significance of J. Nye's concept was exaggerated, and only the described methods were not enough in practice. “Soft power is just a velvet glove that hides an iron hand” (Ferguson 2004, 26). This point is close to the most common perception of soft power in the Russian government. As the Barents Euro-Arctic region has high military importance, all soft power work here reflects security.

Knight argues that at the heart of any force, be it “soft” or “hard”, there are own interests (Knight 2014, 237). National interest is a crucial element in the system of modern international relations. The national interest expresses the primary vital needs for the nation's survival and preservation and the state. “National interests are an open declaration of the state's needs and intentions, based on an assessment of the current situation”, and such a declaration fulfills several important functions in the country's life (Troitsky 2015).

To determine the role of national interest in modern international relations, it is necessary to refer to existing fundamental theories. As Savelyeva writes in her article «The evolution of the use of the term “interest” in the theory of international relations”, there are three main paradigms: realism, liberalism, and constructivism (Savelyeva 2011, 34). In realism and neo-realism, national interest is based on the state's geographic location, economic, cultural, and political development. Interest is a stable and almost unchanging category; it can be changed only due to a change by the state of its geographical position on the world map. Theorists and practitioners of liberalism in some way recognize the existence of “national interest”, but on the condition that moral norms and global problems are included in this concept. The main idea here is that some actors' preferences or their interests change under the influence of others' preferences and do not remain unchanged. It is worth paying attention to social constructivism. Supporters of this idea insist that their implementation's interests and methods are a social phenomenon constructed by society and implemented by it. Thus, interests are based on collective ideas kept in

contracts and practices. Constructivists believe that the world is ruled by ideas, the source of which is people.

Thus, in a narrow sense for any state, it is customary to understand the national interest as a set of measures to protect the state's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and independence, its main institutions of government. Whereas in a broad sense, national interest affects several additional areas of activity, including: “protection of the life and property of its citizens abroad, protectionism concerning the national economy, as well as the prestige of the state in the international arena, protection concerning the traditional way of life, culture, etc.” (Alekseeva 1997, 89).

Various technologies can be used to implement soft power as a tool to advance their national interests. There are two ways of influencing soft power, direct and indirect. The direct influence model assumes that leaders of states change the direction of their policies under the influence of other leaders' beliefs and the attractiveness of their values and attitudes. When operated indirectly, soft power tools aim to change public opinion and third party's opinion, which, in turn, influence the decisions made by political leaders. Various instruments are used in the implementation of soft power. The main tools of soft power include cultural diplomacy; folk culture; education system and student exchanges; information flows; the ability to wage information wars; positioning the country in the global hierarchy; political PR aimed at foreign audiences; global marketing; the language of the country and the degree of its popularity in the world; migration policy; tourism, sports, and cultural exchanges; national diaspora (Nye J. 2007, 163).

Soft power can have a significant impact on ensuring the national security of the Russian Federation. Therefore, it is important to find out the very mechanism of such influence. It is important to highlight that soft power is a resource of our foreign policy, promoting our national interests, creating a positive image in the foreign policy sphere (Bydaev, 2015, 84). In this context, it is important to identify the positive aspects, identify the challenges and threats from foreign policy actors to national interests, and outline their priorities. The main criterion for the correct

choice of the strategy for the implementation of soft power should be its compliance with the country's national interests. Their correct definition is a key task of any state and public institution (Gacko, 2016).

The soft power policy is an established vector of the state's foreign policy development. Although Russia is experiencing a shortage of soft power, it uses the instruments of its influence in different regions of the world but with varying degrees of effectiveness. The previous studies confirm that Russia perceived term “power” mostly in a military way (Forsberg 2013). Currently, the process of expanding the arsenal of soft power is underway, primarily in priority regions. The BEAR was highlighted even in the Foreign policy concept 2008. Since then, the attitude and use of soft power in this region have changed, and now it is reflected in national documents.

The concept of soft power was included in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation in 2013 and then in the 2016 Foreign Policy Concept (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016). The most common understanding of soft power and dominance in Russia is non-military methods of influencing the opposite side. With this approach, economic and political coercion, as well as its other types, fall under the definition of soft power. However, as Tsygankov writes, “Russian understanding of interest in the problem of soft power has a different chronology and nature, only partly repeating the foreign intellectual history of the concept” (Tsygankov 2013). The first attempts to actively implement soft power policies were at the beginning of Medvedev's presidential term. In 2012, an article by the presidential candidate Putin was published. For the first time, the political elite analyzed and introduced the term soft politics from the perspective of Russian national interests (Putin 2012). It described in detail what Russia's national interests were and how the Russian Federation could contribute to spreading its values. There was also a difference in the Russian side's approaches and, for example, the American side. «It is noteworthy that the article describes the instruments of “soft power” as “illegal” (Tsygankov 2013).

Putin's statement contained in the program article was named "Russia and the Changing World". It was stated that "soft power" was a set of tools and methods to achieve foreign policy goals without the use of weapons, but through information and other levers of influence, it reflects the specifics of the domestic approach to the interpretation of "soft power" (Putin 2012). Subsequently, the instrumental approach was enshrined in the 2013 Foreign Policy Concept, where "soft power" was defined as "a comprehensive toolkit for solving foreign policy problems based on the capabilities of civil society, information and communication, humanitarian and other methods and technologies alternative to classical diplomacy" (Ibid.). Thus, "soft power" is viewed as an instrument of geopolitical confrontation because the above-mentioned perception includes instruments from simple image influence to open propaganda.

Based on the scientific literature and Russian reality, one can conclude that understanding the essence of soft power is somewhat different from the generally accepted one. Russian strategic planning documents that define the basic principles, priorities, goals, and objectives in foreign policy and national security contain repeated indications of the importance of soft power and indicate the need to strengthen Russia's role in the global humanitarian space. (National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation 2015).

At the same time, none of these documents discloses the reason for such close attention to these issues. Besides, none of the strategic planning documents reveals the concept of a humanitarian space, where the strengthening of Russia's role should take place, and humanitarianism is reduced to issues of culture, the Russian language, and relations with compatriots. Moreover, the definition of soft power generally dropped out of the latest version of the Russian Foreign Policy Concept. The current Foreign Policy Concept declares "humanitarian technologies" as an instrument of soft power, which is "an integral part of modern international politics" allows to assert that humanitarian activity is nevertheless viewed as an instrument

for promoting Russia's soft power (Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation 2016).

Russia does not abandon the concept of soft power. Based on the Concepts, it can be traced how since 2000 “soft power” or «the desire to spread a positive image” (Abstracts Foreign cultural policy of Russia - year 2000 2000, 74-86) transformed from the point of view of Russia to 2016. In my opinion, this only confirms Russia's use of soft power and, in general, cultural policy in terms of upholding national interests. Indeed, the understanding of soft power mechanisms by Russia and other states differs, as well as the set of tools used to promote a country abroad.

Does Russia use the concept of soft power? Yes, but not at maximum adapted it to the needs of the country. Does it use it successfully? It is rather a matter of image and representation. According to various polls, Russia's image and the degree of trust (which is included in the rating of the use of soft power) is relatively low.

In contrast, according to the same statistics, the country's recognition and the use of the Russian language are high. “Other than in Russia, the Russian language was widely spoken in CIS countries by over 79 million people in 2019. Furthermore, more than 13 million residents of Eastern European and Balkan countries were Russian speakers. Russian was the eighth most widely spoken language worldwide as of 2019” (Geographical distribution of the Russian-speaking population 2019). Accordingly, it turns out that, for example, Russia's Foreign Cultural Policy's goal to preserve and popularize the Russian language is achievable and Russia's soft policy, enshrined at the state level, works. Perhaps, if the foreign policy priorities had not changed, then other objectives of the soft policy would have been achieved.

2.2 “Cultural diplomacy” as part of soft power and Russian foreign cultural policy

The concept of “cultural diplomacy” is primarily a demonstration of national power, as it reveals every aspect of the culture. It also demonstrates competitiveness

in everything from sports to industry to military power and the general confidence of the nation” (Waller 2009, 76). All implemented strategies should guarantee the security of the nation. Although the power is “soft” the main aim, as it was mentioned, is to follow national interests. In this case, cultural diplomacy is the main tool.

Cultural diplomacy can be seen as a component of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy helps to “amplify and advertise that society and culture to the world at large” (Lord 2006, 15). This means that culture can become the component of public diplomacy if there is already a relationship that relayed the information. According to Lord (Ibid. 25), this comes from knowledge of the other's culture. Frederic supposes that “public diplomacy covers undertakings aimed at (recipients) abroad in the fields of information, education and culture, the aim of which is to influence a foreign government by influencing its citizens. (Frederic 1993, 62). Haigh claims that “cultural diplomacy has its roots in cultural relations” (Haigh 1974, 23). According to Taylor “the primary instruments of Cultural Diplomacy are language teaching, educational exchanges, exhibitions”. (Taylor 2007, 79). He also promoted the idea that it is political activity under cover of culture which defend national interests. (Ibid.,90) In Russia's case, this role takes Russian cultural centers abroad. The international exhibition Rossotrudnichestvo is one example of the main Russian center's activities aimed at cultural diplomacy. Recently it organized the round table “For Knowledge to Russia”, which presents the international project of internships with the prospect of employment in the Barents Region “BRIDGE” (MASU 2020).

Waller claims that “cultural diplomacy can only occur when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests” (Waller 2008, 74-75). However, while cultural diplomacy is primarily a government activity, it should not be forgotten that the private sector also plays an important role in culture. The government cannot create culture, society creates it. It can frustrate and direct it, as well as determine its influence on national politics. “While cultural diplomacy endeavors to manage the international

environment, using these sources and achievements, making them known abroad” (Cull 2008, 33).

Cultural diplomacy as soft power is usually seen as a weapon to gain soft control over another nation by applying a non-violent means to promote relationships, engender mutual understanding, and claim support. The purpose of promoting cultural diplomacy is ultimately perceived as the goal to influence a foreign audience and utilize the influence that is built up over a long period. According to Waller, the main purpose of cultural diplomacy is “to harness the elements of culture to induce foreigners to have a positive view of The country's people, culture and policies” (Waller 2009, 77). It is also used «to induce greater cooperation between the two nations, aid in changing the policies or political environment of the target nation, prevent, manage and mitigate conflict with the target nation (Waller 2009, 77). In other words, cultural diplomacy is supposed to be a way of conducting international relations without expecting anything in return in the way that traditional diplomacy typically expects. This seems different from the understanding of soft power in support of national interests. But if one is trying to create a positive view of the country's people, that can be in the national interests and be more than “not expecting anything in return”. This is precisely what a state uses in international policy. It may be even more successful than declaring interests out loud and demanding a special attitude at once in the long term.

Generally, cultural diplomacy is more focused on longer-term and less on specific policy matters (Lord 2006, 30). The obvious intent of using cultural diplomacy for particular policy-related issues is to build up influence over the long term when needed by engaging people directly. This influence has implications that range from national security to increasing tourism and commercial opportunities (Leonard 2002, 51). This has allowed the government to create a foundation of trust and a mutual understanding that is neutral and built on people-to-people contact (Leonard 2002, 51).

One should note the important unique element that is seen in cultural diplomacy. It is the ability to reach youth, non-elites, and other audiences outside of the traditional embassy area (Kashirina and Fedotova 2017).

Russian researchers consider cultural diplomacy to be an integral part of the state's "soft power" policy (Vasilenko 2016, 73).

Not so long ago, the weight and influence of cultural diplomacy had grown so much that a new concept of "foreign cultural policy" was introduced in Russia. In 2001, the first fundamental conceptual document dedicated to cultural diplomacy was presented. In the "Main directions of the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the development of cultural ties between Russia and foreign countries", it was said that the main task of Russia's foreign cultural policy was the formation and strengthening of "mutual understanding and trust with foreign countries, the development of an equal and mutually beneficial partnership with them" (Ibid.) in the system of international cultural cooperation. Moreover, cultural ties, which are one of the most "flexible and effective tools in the mechanism of foreign policy, are called upon to work to create a favorable and objective image of Russia in the world" (Ibid.)

Thus, cultural diplomacy combines the state's policy concerning certain areas of cultural activity, the culture of foreign policy, and the instrumental use of culture and cultural norms in foreign policy. It helps diplomatic activity to overcome cultural barriers. The instruments of cultural influence included in the concept of cultural diplomacy involve the use of various factors such as art, science and education to protect and promote the national interests of the state in the international arena.

To sum up, it is possible to say that Russia's foreign cultural policy is declared in the Foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation. Unfortunately, even the above-mentioned Concepts do not observe problem fully and define a path for Russian cultural policy. The relations in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region are not regulated by Concepts other than the main one. The disappearance of mentioning of

the BEAR/BEAC from the Concepts 2016 shows the decline of interest in the region on the governmental level.

Soft power as a part of Russian cultural policy is used in governmental and scientific documents. Still, the data shows that its understanding, and the essence differs from the worldwide standard. Soft power is used not for external influence and making a good image but for maintaining national interests secured. As the BEAR situation shows, Russian governmental and cultural policy has transformed from the openness of opinions and culture exchange in the 90s to the high concern of soft power other than national interests in the mid-10s.

The cultural diplomacy policy is an instrument of Russian cultural policy, and this is precisely what Russia uses to influence in the international arena. Cultural diplomacy is also used to protect national interests, but according to the data above, it distributes national values and ideas as well.

3. RUSSIAN ROLE IN CURRENT CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE BARENTS REGION

This chapter focuses on the background and history of the BEAR. I believe that it is the purpose of the organization that shapes its further existence; therefore, today, it is necessary to understand the reason for the BEAC creation. One needs to understand that the region under the BEAC is a forum for resolving economic, social, cultural, and sometimes even articulating political issues. Next, we must trace how the main goals and objectives of the organization have changed. For this, we proceed to the program documents. The second question this chapter answer is the definition of Russia's role in the BEAR's creation. This part closely intersects with the problems of the organization's general goals and objectives; however, I dwell in more detail on the reasons and perspectives for Russia.

The main idea for this chapter is the case analysis itself. I try to answer the main question of the thesis about the role of Russia in the region according to its participation in cultural projects. I also seek an answer to the question on the purposes of Russian cultural policy in the Arctic region.

3.1 The Barents Euro-Arctic Region: background and the aims of creation

The BEAR international organization was created in 1993. At the same time, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council was founded by signing the Kirkenes Declaration on January 11, 1993. Now the organization unites nine regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and five constituent entities of the Russian Federation: Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions, Nenets Autonomous District, the Republic of Komi, and Karelia. Iceland and Denmark also participate in the BEAR, although they are not active participants in the programs. The organization's uniqueness is its structure: interaction is carried out between governments and at the level of administrative-territorial entities within the scope of the Barents Regional Council. It is important to note that fourteen Working Groups organize functional interaction in the Barents Region. The Working Groups are divided into BEAC Working Groups, BRC Working Groups, Joint Working Groups, and the Working Group of Indigenous

Peoples. Thus, the cooperation areas embrace such spheres as rescue cooperation, environment, investments economic cooperation, transport and logistics, culture, education, energy, health and social issues, tourism, youth, and indigenous peoples (The Barents Euro-Arctic Council). This makes it possible to optimally combine states' priorities with the needs of individual regions in the interests of the people living there (The Norwegian Barents Secretariat). However, as practice shows, such regional organizations do not always work optimally. For example, there is a serious problem of environmental safety and illegal migration in the Barents region. These problems cannot be solved solely through regional cooperation. Most of the issues are resolved only at the state level.

Returning to the reasons behind the formation of the BEAR, it is worth noting that for the post-Cold War northern Europe, such an opinion was quite a logical and characteristic continuation of the foreign policy line. (Svensson, 1998) After the end of the Cold War, Western countries, particularly the Nordic countries, felt the need for a platform for cooperation not only among themselves but also with the Russian Federation's participation. (Aalto, 2006) This policy's specific goal was to resolve possible conflicts and bridge the gap between West and East through cooperation and joint development (The Barents Euro-Arctic Region). The same was mentioned in the main documents of the organization. The Kirkenes Declaration of 1993 states that the cooperation is “to decrease the tension and increase the region's stability” (Kirkenes Declaration 1993, 1).

Mikhail Gorbachev was one of the first to initiate cooperation in BEAR in Murmansk's speech on October 1, 1987. The proposal to formalize cooperation within the BEAR was put forward in 1992 by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway, Turvadd Stoltenberg (Gorbachev 1987).

The reason for such an initiative was obvious. The Arctic has a special place in Russia's foreign policy agenda. It is also a promising economic region full of natural resources. In terms of its physical and geographical characteristics, the Euro-Arctic zone seems to be promising for the development of both cross-border

infrastructure projects and the oil and gas cluster of the extractive industry. Unfortunately, not every project on oil infrastructure succeeded. On the other hand, the security of Russian Arctic zone is highly important for the state. Technical equipment of the Northern Fleet and its military maneuvers shows the strategic importance of the Arctic. Thus, the development of the Euro-Arctic direction can be named an objective response to the challenges of the time and a strategic decision to ensure Russia's national interests. The Barents Euro-Arctic Council has become a platform for the development of such cooperation. Its creation was expected due to the need for a platform for policy coordination between countries and their regions. This required a political necessity, which was felt both by Russia and by the European Union.

It is worth noting that this structure was created on the initiative of Norway and Russia. It was Russian-Norwegian cooperation that was fundamental for the entire international organization. The development of partnership relations between these countries is developing today and has prospects for the future. Yet, some of the older cooperation does not continue, and the relations are not unproblematic.

Norwegian political scientist Honneland stated that the project was aimed at “reducing military tensions, environmental threats and the gap between East and West in the standard of living in the region” (Honneland 1998, 2). This statement is essential because, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia was still perceived in Europe as a potential threat, so the goal was to create a new kind of organization for multilateral and bilateral cooperation to build mutual trust (Heininen and Lomagin, 2016, 270). The intention was to stimulate and facilitate long-term joint action that would ultimately benefit the region's entire population. The creators also hoped that the agreement would lead to the opening of the previously closed East-West border and better understand living conditions and close cooperation of people from the same region but living in different countries (Stoltenberg and Gorbachev 2016, 17-20).

In general, by the beginning of the 90s, the development of international multi-level platforms for dialogue became both a trend of the times and a necessity. On the one hand, the countries of the former USSR were striving for independence. On the other hand, the countries of northern Europe wanted protection from any outside threat and political stability. According to some political scientists, the BEAR formation would be impossible without those processes (Elenius 2015, 470). Thus, time and some degree of populism influenced the creation of this organization: “the project was linked to the overall regionalization process underway in Europe as well as in the Arctic, turning previously peripheral border areas into meeting places between states in transnational networking involving many-sided interaction” (Honneland, 1998, 15).

One more reason for establishing Barents cooperation, which was especially significant for Norway, was that due to the geographic factors, Norway was excluded from the Baltic region's cooperation. Thus, not least because of “fear of losing its say in the making of Northern European security policy”, Norway was primed to organize a political project to play one of the leading roles (Honneland 1998; Svensson 1998). Although the project was based on bilateral Russian-Norwegian relations, it initially met with skepticism and resistance both from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the central office of Norway, and the Russian military and security services (Heininen and Lomagin 2016, 270). However, later, the idea of a joint platform for resolving possible conflict situations and the potential for reducing military tensions defeated doubts.

The main provisions of the BEAR, formulated by the Barents Regional Council, are improvement of living conditions, sustainable socio-economic development, peaceful and sustainable development of the northernmost regions of Europe, the well-being of people living in the Barents region. Moreover, the expansion of interethnic cooperation in all areas remains the main achievement and the primary tool of strengthening interaction. All participants strive to preserve the culture, customs, and way of life of the indigenous peoples of the region.

However, not all researchers believe that the structure works as declared. Some point out that while leading the BEAC, countries are primarily driven not by the common good but by their own interests (Bailes and Ólafsson 2017, 53). Critics also note that many problems, such as transport accessibility, have not been solved for decades (The Norwegian Barents Secretariat), and the number of environmental issues, despite the declarations and statements of countries about environmental protection, do not diminish (WWF 2018). Russian scientists also note disappointing data on the region's depopulation despite the efforts declared in many documents (Popova and Vicentiy 2019).

Over two decades of cooperation, a stable administrative regional infrastructure has been formed, making it possible to manage the implementation of projects under the Barents Program effectively. To coordinate projects of cultural cooperation, a committee of heads of cultural bodies was created. Initially, this body was called the Committee on Culture (1993-2001). Later it was renamed into the Barents Regional Working Group on Culture under the auspices of the Barents Regional Council (2001-2007). Currently, it is called the “Joint Working Group of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council on culture”.

It should be noted that cultural cooperation in the North of Europe has so far been distinguished mainly by an extensive expansion of culture within the Barents region, often due to language barriers. However, at the same time, strong ties are being established between the various groups of indigenous peoples and peoples inhabiting the region. The Barents Regional Council uses its political influence to raise awareness among people living in the region and to promote the interests of the Barents population at the national, European, and international levels (Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region 2014-2018).

Now let us turn to the BEAR's policy documents for recent years to understand how the region's development goals and objectives were set.

Particular attention will be paid to the analysis of cultural cooperation and programs between the participants. A great impulse to cooperate in the field of culture was given by meeting the ministers of culture on August 31 - September 1, 1993. With a joint declaration, the ministers of culture emphasized their intentions to encourage the development of cultural exchange, contributing to the expansion of knowledge about culture and society, to take care of ancient monuments, to prevent the destruction of common irreplaceable values. In Kirkenes the main objectives of cultural cooperation were decided. Among them one of the main problem was described as a “formation of a single identity, strengthening the sense of belonging to their nations and the BEAR as a whole” (Kirkenes Declaration 1993). The representation of the BEAR as a powerful cultural center in Europe with the help of joining efforts in cultural cooperation was also claimed to be an important part of the BEAR (Ibid.). One of the main strategic goals for all its participants of the BEAR cooperation program is to put cultural ties at the provincial level, bypassing the capital. Another equally crucial strategic goal is to oppose the Americanization of the culture of Northern Europe. (The Barents Euro-Arctic Council)

The first Barents program was already developed in 1994. Together with the BRC, the Barents Secretariat was delegated the authority to greenlight the projects. The main focus was on ensuring that projects receive multilateral funding. The working group on culture developed specific measures that were included in the Barents Program for 1994-1995. in the following nine areas:

1. Environmental challenges are a cultural issue;
2. Film and TV;
3. Training of managers;
4. Sports cooperation;
5. Dancing;

6. Annual festivals in each subject;
7. Pre-project of the Sami cultural center in Lovozero (Murmansk region);
8. Pre-project of the Nenets ethnic center;
9. Church contacts.

The second Barents program's next step was creating an extensive database of multilateral projects funded by Norway, Finland, and Sweden. By 1996, the Council had established several key programs for the development of the region. These include INTERREG and TACIS (Fokin and Smirnov 2012).

These were the original goals of the BEAC. Now let us turn to more modern projects. The Barents Program 2014 - 2018 is the seventh Barents Program since the signing of the Kirkenes Declaration in 1993. One should note that every two years chair country presents its own program which usually follows the main idea of the Council's program. The program aims to find solutions to common problems and to define a common framework for cooperation in the region (Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region 2014-2018). There are several common regional development goals for all 13 members of the Barents Region. First, there is a demographic problem throughout the region, a high unemployment level, especially among young people.

Therefore, the first challenge is to attract a skilled workforce and improve skills by providing education and training throughout an active life. This issue is of great importance for the entire Barents region and can be resolved based on multilateral cooperation. The second most crucial issue is the use of business opportunities. The third essential component of regional development is the environment. It is necessary to create attractive living conditions, take measures to preserve the ecology and a favorable environment, ensure a high quality of life, and attract the region's population, especially young people and women.

Cultural cooperation in 2014-2018 aimed to attract tourists, investments and develop the BEAR countries' attractiveness. The increase in the importance of cooperation in the field of innovation and scientific research can be indirectly attributed to this. In this regard, the INTERREG Nord and Horizon 2020 programs can be singled out. The Horizon 2020 program is focused on such key priorities as the science of high achievements, industrial leadership, and social challenges. For the Barents Region, such an area as high-performance science provides additional opportunities for attracting funding; for example, funding opportunities for mobility programs involving scientists from universities in the Barents Region (Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region 2014-2018). In general, the cultural agenda in the 2014-2018 declaration, unfortunately, was not represented by large joint projects. However, initiatives at the local level continued to develop, reflected in the Strategy for Cultural Cooperation (Ibid.). Following the BEAR documents, the youth support program also refers to the region's cultural issues since youth, in the opinion of the organization's participants, is the bearer of the region's unique culture.

The goal of the Barents Cooperation has always been to overcome cultural barriers and create bridges between countries. This was confirmed in the next Barents Program 2019-2023. It focused on cultural cooperation between youth, schoolchildren, and the goal was to continue to popularize the BEAR brand (Creative Barents 2019-2023). It is emphasized that cultural cooperation will be carried out both through dialogue between the region's inhabitants and with the help of cultural institutions. It was decided that the Barents Cultural Cooperation Scholarship will be awarded every two years.

Moreover, the emphasis is placed on youth and their cooperation in the current program. Supporting collaboration between schools, especially in the areas of culture, language, and the environment is seen as necessary as contributing to the development of new and strengthening of existing student exchange programs. Compared to previous cultural projects, programs were planned for 2019-2023 to

broadly support gender equality in the field of culture. The Barents Winter and Summer Games became an arena for sports and cultural exchange (Ibid.).

I would like to highlight that in Russian Chairmanship Priorities for 2015-2017, the necessity of developing cultural affairs was specifically mentioned (Priorities of the Russian chairmanship 2015-2017). Even more, Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov mentioned in his statement at the BEAC Ministerial Session in 2015 that “people-to-people contacts, and cultural exchanges will contribute to strengthening the concept of the Barents identity based on a common history and association with the same social and cultural space” (Statement by Sergey Lavrov 2015). At the same time, the overall context of the statement as well as of the Russian Chairmanship Priorities is devoted to the practical sides of the cooperation, such as energy, forestry, healthcare, reduction of environmental hot spots in the Russian part of the Barents Region, transport, and logistics issues as well as emergency prevention and response.

To sum up, the development of the BEAR direction in foreign policy of Russia is about national interests. It is also important to note that the development of the Arctic areas cannot be fulfilled without joint mutually beneficial work with international partners. “This cooperation ensures the development of Russia's northern regions, helps the rapprochement with the northern neighbors, and brings considerable economic benefits. Besides, it brings Russia closer to realizing its Arctic ambitions” (Kurylev and Petrova 2016).

Cooperation carried out on two levels pursues several goals - a platform for resolving state problems and an opportunity for regions to communicate directly. For Russia, the BEAC and the BRC has become an opportunity to articulate problems and get closer to neighbors in the region, overcome cultural, economic, and political barriers, and hope for the development of a far from being the most popular and developed region of the country. To achieve the goals of mutual understanding, communication, and rapprochement of the population of the region, cultural diplomacy was used as a communication mechanism. All this is reflected in

the documents since the first programs devoted to culture as a tool for the development of the Region.

3.2 Analysis of 2003-2013 Barents Cultural programs

In order to analyze the role of Russia in the cultural cooperation of the region, it is necessary to understand that any cultural cooperation directly depends on the political situation between the studied actors. In this case, the main starting point for the change in cultural ties is 2014 - the events in Crimea, sanctions, and a radical revision of Western colleagues' activities in Russia. Therefore, it is advisable to consider the programs of cultural cooperation the BEAR, dividing those that were adopted before 2014 and after it.

Cultural cooperation the BEAR after 1993 was dynamic and productive. So, in the period from 1993 to 2000, 416 full-scale cultural projects were carried out. Indeed, Russia's role in the first decade was rather passive. Most of the cultural projects were funded mainly by Norway, Finland, and Sweden. The Ministry of Culture of the Arkhangelsk Region contributed part of the budget to projects, but this was only a small part. In the 90s, projects differed in a variety of directions, but dance programs and exhibitions prevailed. Russia took an active part in all projects, and the projects themselves were focused on the inclusion of Russian regions in the emerging Barents culture. However, in Russia, there were certain problems with participation in the BEAR projects. First of all, these are financial issues. While in the Nordic countries, cultural cooperation within the region is financed through the Foreign Ministries, the Russian Foreign Ministry does not provide such assistance to the territories. The issue of creating a single Russian BEAR fund has been raised several times, but it has not been resolved. In 1997, the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation for the first time accepted a consolidated application from three Russian participants in cooperation - the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions and the Republic of Karelia - for financing events, and some funds were allocated, but clearly insufficient to act as a full-fledged partner in this cooperation.

Cultural cooperation in the BEAR was aimed at involving as many actors as possible in this process. “This should contribute not only to mutual professional enrichment but also to the strengthening of mutual understanding and the development of cooperation” (Vostryakov 1998, 2).

In the first decade of the region's activity, it was believed that cultural cooperation should not only promote culture and the unification of peoples but also should promote the economy. Undoubtedly, culture played the role of a conductor, ensuring success at the “stage of acquaintance”, but it did not solve more serious problems in the first decade. The volume of investments in the economy turned out to be insignificant. Otherwise, in a situation where cultural events retained a narrow departmental character and were not formalized in the form of large projects with the involvement of entrepreneurs and potential investors, at least in the form of sponsors and guests, it probably could not be.

In general, the first decade was marked by the interpenetration of cultures. Russia participated in projects, although it did not finance them, relying on the subsequent development of the country's regions with Western colleagues' help according to documents and the project plans of the BEAR. (The Barents Euro-Arctic Council's documents) It should be said that help from neighbors during these years was also joyfully received in Russia. It turned out that cooperation at the initial stage was mostly idealistic and imbued with the belief that any cultural events contribute to the development of intercultural dialogue. The main points on which the cooperation was based was the opinion that culture served as an effective mechanism for transmitting information, creating trust, which was necessary for cooperation in other areas.

According to the implementor of this Project in Russia, the first stage of the Program revealed many problems. Such as “randomness in carrying out events, lack of opportunity to provide and receive the necessary information in time, lack of coordination of actions and imbalance in different cultural areas” (Vostryakov

1998). He outlined problems of joint finances as one of the main problem (Vostryakov 1998).

The first full-fledged program for cultural cooperation in the Barents region was signed in Arkhangelsk in 2002, was developed for 2003-2006, and was called “Voices of the Barents Region”. The Program pictured several objectives for the BEAR’s cultural cooperation:

1. “To make the Barents Region culturally more visible at the international level and thus contribute to its economic development.

2. To create new opportunities for the interaction of cultures, peoples, and especially youngsters.

3. Consolidate creative and managerial forces to form the Barents Euro-Arctic region's identity as a unique cultural region in northern Europe” (Voices in the Barents Region 2003-2006).

The main task of the Program was the development of multilateral cooperation. The priority was given to projects with the participation of three or more countries of the region.

It should be noted here that the goals of cultural cooperation defined in the Program do not contradict the 2000 Russian Security Concept and, overall, repeat Russia's aspirations for active, positive representation in the world, even by separate regions. However, one should not forget that since 2001 the concept of «national interests» has already been reflected in the main Russian documents on culture. Therefore, clause 3 on the creation of a separate Barents identity could alert the Russian side.

The regional working group determined several steps and strategies which determined the program. First of all, it was agreed that at least one representative from each of the four countries and representatives of all thirteen regions should participate. One of the most important issue was described as organized activities

and events “from people to people” (Voices in the Barents Region 2003-2006, 4). Organization of festivals and seminars decided to be the most effective way of transferring and exchanging cultural experience. That would help to share this experience. It was also noted that implementation of bilateral projects aimed at local problems of cultural cooperation were highly welcomed (Ibid., 5).

The first program on the culture of the Barents region was divided into four sections. The “Multilateral Projects” section included 14 projects. Russia took part in all 14 projects from this section. Three of them were organized by Russian regions. Besides, during the period 2003-2006, another 13 projects were implemented that were not planned in the original program but successfully implemented. Among them, six were organized by the Russian regions (Voices in the Barents Region 2003-2006).

In general, all multilateral cultural projects of the “Voices of the Barents Region” can be divided into the following areas, according to the official report (the only official report on the Barents program) (Report on the results of the Program of Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region in 2003–2006 “Voices in The Barents Region”):

Artistic projects.

1. “Guest Studios for Artists” – the creation of a unified network of art workshops in the BEAR regions in order to provide free workplace and accommodation for artists who come to create their works. It is worth noting that although Russia did not act as the organizer, most of these guest studios were located on its territory (Ibid. 6).
2. “New forms of art in the Barents region” (later - “Artistic innovations”) – this project “aimed to revitalize such areas of art as design and arts and crafts” (Ibid. 6).
3. “Northern Cities” – was aimed at creating a positive image of the Region(Ibid. 6).

4. “Migration - visual art” – the project which involved the creation of a permanent mobile exhibition of works about traditions of the peoples in the Barents region. It was “aimed at strengthening mutual understanding and respect between people living on different sides of the borders”. (Ibid.6-7)

Musical projects.

1. “Chamber Orchestra of the Barents Region” – was the creation of a chamber orchestra of young musicians from the BEAR countries. The project was promising, but it lasted only a year due to lack of funding, but 2 out of 3 rehearsals took place in Russia.
2. “International Center for Choral Music in the Barents Region” – was a center of choral education. Its concerts were given in Russia and Finland, but this project was also closed due to lack of funding (Ibid. 8).
3. “Barents Summer Music Academy” – was a Russian project that created “an open institute in the field of music education, in which well-known Russian and foreign musicians could be involved in teaching” (Ibid. 8).

Literary projects.

1. “Young Writers of the Barents Region” – was a big project which desired to at expand knowledge about the Barents Region among children and young citizens of the region. Within the scope of the «Young Writers of the Barents Region» project, an international competition for children's handwritten books has been held for all four years, which is still the most significant international children's project in the BEAR. The organizer was the Murmansk Regional Children's and Youth Library. The number of project participants has reached 2000 people. The “Young Writers of the Barents Region” project was closely related to the other “Barents Literary Camp for Youth” project. As a result of joint activities on these projects in 2005, the final festival of children's and youth literature “Centropheria” was held, at which a collection of literary works by young writers named

“Centropheria. Anthology of Young Writers of the Barents Region”, was published in Petrozavodsk (Ibid. 9).

2. “Barents literary camp for youth” – Russia became the site of the camp twice during the period of implementation of the program. However, funding data available only for 2005 suggests that Russia contributed the least amount to the project's development compared to the rest of the participants. Unfortunately, the websites of all the projects above are no longer available, so it is not possible to access the rest of the financial statements (Ibid. 9).
3. “Children's Polar Library” is a virtual library for children and adolescents, which was to be posted on the Internet portal in order to demonstrate the capabilities of the libraries of the future. During the Children's Polar Library project, websites were opened in Sweden, Norway, and Finland, but the Russian side refrained from participating in the project in this format, although the libraries provided information for foreign colleagues. Perhaps in 2003-2006, there was no possibility of using the Internet in the Barents regions of Russia for such projects (Ibid. 9).

Projects for the Barents region cultural heritage development

1. “Cultural Portal of the Barents Region” – was an interactive platform for specialists’ communication (Ibid. 9).
2. “Rock painting on the outskirts of Europe” – “a project aimed at identifying and preserving archaeological heritage objects in the BEAR countries, especially rock carvings” (Ibid., 10). Karelia took an active part in the project, received funding for the study of petroglyphs, but the project did not achieve all its goals and objectives since a similar project already existed in parallel, which involved some regions of the BEAR and made it difficult to obtain funding (Ibid. 9).
3. “Gateway to Barents” - had the aim to create consulting centers in the BEAR where all the information about the region and its projects would be

stored. The project was financed from the participating regions' own sources, grants from the Northern Cultural Fund, and sponsorship from the Russian Cotton holding. As a result of the project, a network of experienced and trained experts was created in 6 regions of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Russia, and Estonia, who support cultural cooperation in their regions on international project activities and search for partners (Ibid. 9).

4. "The Second World War - 1000 Letters About War and Peace" – a project dedicated to an exhibition about the letters written during the Second World War (Ibid. 9-10).

It is worth paying attention to which projects were under the patronage of the Russian side. Among the planned programs is the Barents Summer Music Academy, the organizer of the project is the Ministry of Culture and Public Relations of the Republic of Karelia, the subproject "Young Writers of the Barents Region" and "World War II - 1000 Letters about War and Peace" a project from the National Museum and the Ministry of Culture Komi Republic. The Barents Summer Music Academy was not a unique project for the region. In the same period, a literary-oriented summer camp was active. Consequently, the musical project's organization did not stand out from the general outline of other participants' events. That was not true for the project dedicated to the Second World War.

However, the Barents Summer Music Academy was directed, contrary to the original idea, exclusively at Russian participants and lost its multilateral character. Thus, the project did not fulfill the declared international character but was carried out under the auspices of the Barents region. On the contrary, the international competition for children's handwritten books proved to be quite popular and met all multilateral project requirements in the Barents region.

«The Second World War - 1000 Letters about War and Peace» turned out to be a project that did not receive a response from its neighbors, partly because the information is presented only for the Komi Republic and the Republic of Karelia and only in Russian. Perhaps the incredible popularity of the theme of the Second

World War is spread mainly on Russia's territory. This project was aimed at residents of the Russian part of the region. Other project participants did not send materials for participation.

Projects outside the Voices of the Barents Region program, organized by the Russian side, included literary events, tourism development, theatrical arts, and bilateral projects between Russia and Norway.”

During the implementation of the Cultural Cooperation Program 2003-2006 “Voices of the Barents Region”, hundreds of exchange visits were made by participants in cultural cooperation.

A fact that regional centers and small settlements were actively involved in this process became an essential point. For example, Severomorsk of the Murmansk region, despite the complexity of its visit by foreign citizens, has been successfully developing sister-city relations with the Finnish city of Kem and the Norwegian commune of Sor-Varanger for many years now.

Another important aspect was the practice of concluding bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of culture and art with a validity period of 1–2 years between the cultural authorities of the BEAR territories, which was finally formed during the implementation of the “Voices of the Barents Region” Program. Those agreements between Russian and Finland cities were implemented shortly after the program was released.

The report of the “Voices of the Barents Region” program points out the pros and cons of implementing the activities (Voices of the Barents Region 2003-2006). For example, the authors argue that “A single cultural space has been created on the Barents Euro-Arctic Region territory” (Ibid., 26), however, it is difficult to embrace it unequivocally. Russia took part in almost all events and provided venues for their holding. However, the fact that two out of three above-mentioned projects from the draft programs aimed at multilateral cooperation, in fact, met the interests of Russia exclusively and did not attract neighbors in the region, shows that the cultural agenda

declared to the outside is somewhat different from other regions. At the same time, 2003-2006 became the period of Russia's most extraordinary openness in holding cultural events in the Region. The reports show that the BEAR's function as a liaison between Europe and Russia has been fulfilled. The report shows how significant the presence of Russian regions is, is comprehensive, and desirable according to the amount of the projects involving Russia. However, all the same events under Russia's patronage stand out from the general canvas of transboundary and building a common identity.

One more conclusion of the Report “Achieved real equal partnership” remains quite controversial. “The implementation of the Program contributed to the involvement of all the BEAR regions in cooperation equally. Before the adoption of the Program, cooperation developed more in the border areas. Due to the lack of the necessary experience in international project activities from the Russian participants, the projects' main responsibility fell on the organizations of Norway, Finland, and Sweden” (Voices in The Barents Region 2003-2006, 19). It was noted that during this program, all regions acted as equal and more important financed the projects equally (Ibid.).

It is difficult to agree entirely with this conclusion since the report shows that the Russian regions took a financial part in the projects, but their contribution was one of the most insignificant. Nevertheless, except for festivals held in Russia, almost all events were directed in one way or another to Russia's citizens living in the Region.

In general, the Program for Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region for 2003-2006 “Voices of the Barents Region” was the first large-scale experience of organizing planned cultural cooperation in BEAR. The role of Russia turned out to be multifaceted. For the most part, it can be called an active participant in events, a recipient of grants, and a very hospitable neighbor. However, our own multilateral projects were not aimed at developing the region's common identity but at

introducing the national agenda of Russia and developing the regions included in the BEAR. As it was shown by the projects which Russia presented.

The second cultural program of the Barents region, “New winds in the Barents region”, is a continuation of the first program aimed to promote cultural diversity and multicultural dialogue and use culture as one of the tools for regional, social and economic development (New winds in the Barents Region 2008-2010). “The overarching goal of the Cultural Cooperation Program 2008-2010 is to strengthen cultural cooperation further and increase the importance of culture itself in the Barents Region. The goal of the Program is to promote the formation of cultural diversity and the creation of intercultural dialogue, to consider culture as a means of social and economic development of the region, and to identify new places for cultural meetings” (Ibid. 15). Thus, there was no fundamental change in the goals and objectives of the program. However, this period became one of the most important in cultural cooperation in the BEAR for Russia. This was reflected in the number of projects organized by Russia in 2008-2010 and its chairmanship of the BEAC 2007-2009. “The Russian Chairmanship's priority will be to ensure sustainable development in the Barents Region with emphasis on social and economic factors, linking it closely to the compliance with environmental requirements, and also to support for the indigenous peoples” (Program of the Russian Chairmanship in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2007 - 2009). Although the main cultural agenda of Russia for the period of chairmanship was not stated in the 2007 program, the second Cultural Program revealed the main provisions and projects.

The 2008-2010 project plan showed that culture's main directions, such as music and art, have remained mainstream. However, it can be traced that the Russian projects in the second program become tied to the locality and culture of specific peoples living on it. For example, “The white sea - Center for Culture and Tourism in Belomorsk,” “Karelia Renaissance - the southern Karelia historical villages - rebirth project.”, “International festival of epics Kalevala,” “Cooperation projects

between the Karelian State Philharmonic and Barents euro -arctic region.” At the same time, one may note that projects not from Russia were aimed at the international participation and did not have any dominant culture in them. They were designed for the creation of the common Barents identity in contrast with Russian projects (New winds in the Barents Region 2008-2010).

However, five projects were aimed at international equivalent cooperation. During the second program, Russia carried out an international choreography project, Dances in the Polar Circle, which began in 2009 and lasted until 2018, judging by open sources. However, by 2016, the initial project had completed its work, and the idea of a festival with an almost identical project went beyond the Barents region. Although by 2013, only Norway took part in the festival due to its close ties with Murmansk (IV International Festival-Competition of Choreographic Art 2013).

It should be noted that Russia's cultural events, contrary to the rest of the BEAR, were not aimed at cultural exchange among children and youth, and the main exchange of competences was through training programs for officials, teachers, and cultural workers (New winds in the Barents Region 2008-2010).

Such an example is the international project «Development of the competencies of cultural managers: development of an innovative model for the North-West of Russia» (“Cultural Competence Cluster”) (2008 - 2009) (Lapteva G 2009, 26-27). The Nordic countries' internship participants (Sweden and Denmark) were representatives of the administration, cultural managers, heads of state, and municipal cultural institutions of the Arkhangelsk and Murmansk regions. The other projects had the same representation: “Bridges of understanding and friendship: television conference about children's and youth's spiritual development,” “International scientific conference: Cultural heritage of Barents region,” “Cooperation projects between the Karelian State Philharmonic and Barents euro-arctic region.”

During this period, a relatively large number of bilateral projects which were not included in the Cultural Program were carried out at the regional level. However, Russia remains a platform for various, mainly ethnographic festivals and events. Unfortunately, the annual reports of the JWGC do not provide complete data on the implementation of cultural programs in 2008–2010. Taking them into account, one can trace that the period of Russian chairmanship 2007–2009 became the most active for Russian projects, forums on its territory, and international festivals.

Thus, the second Cultural Cooperation Program, “New winds in the Barents Region”, became a program project during the Russian chairmanship of BEAC (Program of the Russian Chairmanship in the Barents Euro-Arctic Council 2007 - 2009). Russia organized many more events than in one program, which significantly increased all participants' equivalence in cooperation. However, again, most of the projects were devoted to issues that reflected Russian interests or concerned them. Despite the Program's statements about the creation and strengthening of a single cultural identity, Russia's programs are far from its creation. In 2008-2010, Russia was more likely to use the BEAR as a representative platform for its own capabilities and focuses its efforts on drawing attention to its northern regions.

Of course, at the municipalities' level, the picture was slightly different. However, the cities were mostly involved in bilateral activities rather than in multilateral ones. These were the relations that had developed over the years thanks to the proximity of borders. It should be noted that 2008-2010 became a period of active exchange of information in the field of culture. The Russian regions became an open platform for this exchange and territory of opportunities. This was also due to Russia's largely favorable agenda in the international arena. The number of projects with the participation and under the leadership of Russia increased, but at the same time, the agenda of Russian projects in the second Program was not internationally oriented.

“New Horizons in the Barents Region” 2011–2013 was the third cultural cooperation program in the Barents Region. It was adopted in Arkhangelsk and

retained the direction of the first two. However, in the third program, great emphasis was placed on youth activities to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, create new meeting places for different cultures, and increase the importance of culture for development.

It is interesting to note that on the JWGC official website, this program is presented only in English, whereas before that, all official documents have been presented even in Russian (New Horizons in the Barents Region 2011-2013). Unfortunately, there is no single document with the list of the Program's projects on the official website. Information can only be found through the regional reports of the Russian regions' cultural departments; however, it is impossible to separate the state's initiatives, and program's one. Therefore, one will focus on multilateral projects under the regions' leadership exclusively.

The Ministry of Culture of the Arkhangelsk Region was actively involved in positioning the Arkhangelsk Region as one of the international cultural centers of the BEAR through work within the framework of the JWGC. For the specified period, the Arkhangelsk region became the organizer of the International Scientific and Cultural Barents Forum. Opening of the exhibition “Secrets of the Arctic Seas. Marine Diary of the Willem Barents Expedition ”, Project “ Cold Shores - Close Relations: History of Polar Expeditions and Northern Navigation ”: opening of exhibitions in Onega and Tromsø (Norway), VI International Music and Theater Festival “ European Spring,” XVII International street theater festival, «Living Stories» - an international exhibition project.

The Murmansk Region organized the International Festival of Puppet Theaters of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, «Friendship Bridge 20 Years Long», «Art Biennale» X-Border, «which was a subproject in the field of contemporary art of the large-scale project» New Horizons of the Barents Region 2013– 2014». The Republic of Karelia represented the International Environmental Film Festival in Karelia, and the Komi Republic did not act as an organizer in program projects but

was an active participant (Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Archival Affairs of the Komi Republic 2012, 23).

Art, music, and literature remained the main focus of events. It is important to note that the number of multilateral projects and activities has slightly decreased compared to the number of projects in the previous program, but the number and quality of bilateral projects have increased. However, they took place only among close neighbors in the Region. The number of scientific projects increased, although those organized by the Russian side were again aimed at leaders rather than young people and students.

According to the available data, it can be concluded that during the period 2011-2013, the number of multilateral projects decreased (possibly due to the fact that Russia ceased to lead the BEAC, and there was no need to present the country actively). The projects' cultural orientation remained practically unchanged, despite a slight shift in emphasis towards the development of youth exchanges. Russia mainly organized training courses for leaders.

It should be noted that the Russian regions remain venues for numerous festivals and bilateral projects, actively participating in many large-scale projects, for example, New Horizons in the Barents Region 2013–2014. New Horizons in the Barents Region 2013–2014 is a continuation of the same name's cultural program - the largest and most successful program ever to appear in the BEAR on its own. European grants from the Kolarctic provided its funding, but all countries took part in creating the events (New Horizons 2013-2014).

Perhaps this was the event that reflects the essence of such a partnership. Russia, together with Finland, was responsible for music and literature projects. All countries and almost all municipalities in the Region were involved in organizing and conducting the events. It indeed was a culture-based unifying collaboration.

The decade during which the first three cultural cooperation programs in the Barents Region have been operating has been eventful. The first programs' goals and

objectives were almost identical and aimed at establishing close structured contacts, developing a common culture in the Region. Russia took part in the Barents region's programs at two levels: state and regional.

Over the first decade of the Programs, one can trace the development of Russia's role from a recipient of projects and an active participant to a full-fledged organizer of various multilateral events. This period is notable for the openness of sites for the reception of neighbors and their initiatives and the desire to draw attention to the northern regions of the country. Russia pinned hopes that economic projects would also be implemented through cultural cooperation.

Unfortunately, not all the initiatives of the Russian regions have been successful. Many projects died without a response from neighbors and without funding, for example “Dances in the Polar circle” that stopped existing in 2016. However, some Program Projects in Russia do not fully meet the spirit of creating a single identity for the region, which the participants in cooperation call for. Russian projects instead do not unite common values but present their agenda through culture. This is just an example of how soft politics, which is represented through such projects, works in Russia to preserve national interests, which have been actively featured in the National Security Strategy since 2000.

In accordance with the Concepts of Russia's foreign cultural policy for this period, the position of the Russian regions is quite open. However, through some events, it is possible to trace the national agenda of the state. The state's position regarding such cooperation is absolutely non-aggressive. Even state and local media perceive this cultural exchange favorably. Over the decade, Russia has been transforming from an observer to an organizer, although funding for projects is not entirely equal.

Thus, the 90s made it possible for Russia to become a member of the partnership, and the first decade of the Programs strengthened good-neighborly relations through cultural projects. Due to a slightly changed perception of the

concept of “soft power”, projects were carried out through Programs aimed at representing national interests rather than creating a single identity. Perhaps, the question of a single identity in the 2003–2013 Programs was the only one that did not completely suit Russia. During this period, it was ignored by official representatives.

The 2003–2013 programs expanded bilateral cooperation between the regions. Municipal projects have a different focus during this period. Although, unfortunately, multilateralism was not fully implemented, as the BEAR and the BEAC conceived it, the rapid development of bilateral projects was also due to the Programs.

It can be said that at this stage, the role of Russia was transitional. The Russian regions were very active and strove for further communication with each other. The first large-scale projects appeared, aimed at the common Barents Region for the peoples represented. In the future, the state line of national and cultural policy could retreat, making it possible for the BEAR regions to develop together, as has been planned since 1993. However, there was a second way, which included tight control of the Arctic zone situation and the promotion of their interests, including through culture. In 2003-2013, Russia was balancing between these options, trying to bring its own interests to the common Barents agenda while remaining interested in cooperation.

3.3 Analysis of 2014-2023 Barents Cultural programs

The stages of Russia's cooperation in the region very much depend on the political situation in the international arena, although even some Russian members of the organization deny this. In the 90s, there was a constant flow of directed investments to develop the Russian parts of the region and active growth and development. Since the mid-2000s, with the beginning of the strengthening of the spread of Russia's national interests through culture, Russia has somewhat changed its approach and has become not only a recipient but also an organizer of projects.

The year 2014 was a turning point for many aspects of Russian politics. However, the adoption of the fourth cultural program in the Barents region took place back in 2013 long before the events, but it is important to trace whether international relations influenced the role of Russia in cultural cooperation in the Barents region. In 2013, the Russian authorities indicated that science was one of the most important components of cooperation: “we see it as a 'smart' part of Europe, consistently developing innovative and high-tech interaction to benefit the people living here, including the indigenous population” (Ministry of Culture of the Arkhangelsk Region 2013).

In general, the vector of cooperation interests was shifted in the new cultural program. The mission formulated new ideas for cooperation in the field of science and youth policy. Moreover, an important goal was to attract business to the region through culture (Cultural Cooperation in the Barents Region Strategy 2014–2018). Over the years of BEAR's official existence, cooperation has been developing in many areas, while culture is considered a full partner of the economy. Undoubtedly, culture played the role of a conductor, ensuring success at the «acquaintance stage», but it has not yet achieved the solution of more serious problems. The volume of investments in the economy turned out to be insignificant. However, economic goals were also significant for the development of the region.

The Russian side noted that the regional council plays the leading connecting role in the organisation's coordination and work. This remark is especially important in connection with the transfer of powers to Arkhangelsk as chairman of the Regional Council.

It is worth noting that the main areas of work of the 2014–2018 Program, at least for the initial period, remained the New Horizons 2013–2014 program, as well as the Kolarctic. It is noteworthy that Kolarctic became the only one of the four big international projects financed by the EU in which Russia participated.

The Arkhangelsk Region was the flagship in cooperation at the initial stage of the Program implementation. For example, in Archangelsk such exchange programs were organized for young artists, dancers, and musicians from Norway and students of the Arkhangelsk College of Culture and Art. They worked together on the Russian-Norwegian projects such as “Arctic Articulation” and “Youth Arctic Dialogue” (Ministry of Culture of the Arkhangelsk Region 2014).

In the Russian documents during the first stage of the Program 2014-2018, it was noted that the success of regional cooperation in the field of culture directly depended on the simplification of the visa regime. However, unfortunately, such ideas ceased to appear in documents and statements after 2015, when events in the international arena, sanctions, and complication of relations between the EU and Russia.

Thus, during the first period of the Program's implementation, there were no fundamental changes in participants' roles and a shift in Russia's cultural policy focus. Arkhangelsk played the main role in the connection of the regions as the head of the regional council, the implementation of the global program «New Horizons» continued, where the regions of Russia played one of the leading roles, although it is worth noting that Norway and Sweden had the training part of the project. Bilateral cooperation continued in the Russian regions in the same volume and the same directions. A scholarship was even offered in the field of culture, which was supported by Russia and implemented in 2016 (Barents Scholarship for Cultural Cooperation Guidelines 2016).

In 2015, the number of negative statements in the Russian press about the Barents region increased. The BEAR has evolved into a Norwegian conspiracy to destroy the Russian north from a promising cooperation among media outlets (Semushin 2015). Henceforth, everything that concerned culture was perceived as an encroachment on the region's integrity and as a desire to spread influence on young people, especially students, of the Russian north. According to the materials, the newspapers that suddenly changed their minds about cooperation in the Barents

region belong to those considered to be direct transmitters of the Kremlin's official position. So, considering the above, since about 2013–2015, there has been a systemic deterioration in the perception of the Barents region within Russia at the state policy level.

Indeed, the shift in the significance of these regional relations was evident. The 2012 Russian security concept, as well as the 2012 Arctic development strategy, attached particular importance to the preservation of peaceful relations in the Arctic regions. However, they pay little attention to joint actions with other countries to preserve peace, whereas earlier such documents spoke of cooperation to support a peaceful neighborhood in the region. This, as follows from the documents, should have been facilitated by culture.

Since that time, soft power has ceased to work for Russia's foreign policy to attract foreign citizens. It was more focused on protecting national interests and not involving its citizens in forming Barents identity and participation in “untrusty” projects than ever before. Some researchers note that from a certain period, the cultural policy of Russia began to transform from liberal to conservative.

At the BEAC level, the number of initiatives from Russia decreased, and those that remained were not as large as during its first leadership of the Council. The 2014-2018 program set one of the main tasks to increase education's attractiveness in the region. Firstly, this concerns the already mentioned scholarship program in the field of culture. However, judging by the report for 2015-2017, Russia was the least involved in the scholarship approval process. There were problems with financing and accepting the necessary documents (The Report during the Chairmanship period 2015-2017).

The Culture Report 2015-2017 was generally quite disappointing. It dealt with one large program of the Region. Whereas in the reports of other years, there were much more projects in which Russia participated. Moreover, almost every meeting of the Council for Culture during this period, as indicated, did not achieve its goals

due to Russia's bureaucratic problems. This fact was strange since 2015-2017 was the period of Russian chairmanship at the BEAC.

However, during this period, Russia continued and expanded cooperation between universities, which was reflected in its program (Ivanov 2014). Special attention was also paid to the indigenous peoples (Priorities of the Russian chairmanship 2015-2017). Unfortunately, since 2015 one can observe a decrease in an international character's cultural events in the regions.

For example, judging by the «Passport of the cultural life of the Arkhangelsk region» for 2015-2018, international projects' number and scale decreased dramatically from over a hundred to nearly 20. As well as the directions through which cultural diplomacy was conducted. During this period, the Arkhangelsk region became less representative of the region in the Barents countries. Even international festivals were only in musical and theater area. One can note a smaller scale of events and coverage of events in the press, especially foreign ones. Significant cultural events such as the “Urban Camp International Festival” and “The Northern Voices Project” were bilateral, not multilateral. Moreover, even the number of bilateral projects became less from several dozens to less than 10 (Analytics and reports of the Arkhangelsk region).

Thus, it can be concluded that during the period of the fourth program on cultural cooperation in the Barents region, state interests began to shift towards the protection of the national interests of Russia. Cultural diplomacy ceased to be dominant in cooperation. The number of multilateral projects confirmed at the state level has decreased, while bilateral ties between regions have continued to strengthen. However, the trend of close cooperation between neighboring regions of different countries has only become firmly established, contrary to the programmatic goals of expanding cooperation between different regions.

One can say that since 2015 Russia has been pursuing a more closed policy in the Region. There were no new programs organized by Russia, and in some, it seems

to have lost interest. The cultural involvement is less than ever before. Indirectly, the deteriorating perception of the region's activities and Russia's changing goals in it are indicated by incriminating articles from newspapers that have not previously expressed concerns about the cultural activities of other countries in the BEAR territory. However, bilateral ties between cities, universities, and teams remained the same, although some visits were canceled due to funding cuts.

Thus, in the period from 2014 to 2018 at the state level, Russia lost interest in close cooperation in the field of culture among the BEAR countries. The regions were more interested in continuing cooperation. However, their ties were mainly bilateral and cross-border, and a change in the state policy vector significantly affected the openness of borders, the number of festivals, and involvement in large-scale projects.

The current program is designed for four years (Creative Barents 2019-2023). “Creative Barents 2019-2023” is the fifth cultural program and the first in which the creation and promotion of Barents identity are among the main tasks. Also, the program sets the goal of cooperation between the inhabitants of the region and the desire to transform cultural cooperation into an economic one (Ibid.).

The entire program is aimed at creating and maintaining the Barents identity. Russia supported the Program, but national interests, Arctic policy, and the National Security Concept do not reflect this initiative. On the contrary, all official documents did not reflect an interest in creating a certain identity. Moreover, all projects led by Russia have never reflected this side of the partnership. Since about 2015, Russia has stopped offering new multilateral programs. Furthermore, the 2019 report did not mention any achievements of the Russian regions (Annual Report 2019).

In the Russian Foreign Ministry's comments in connection with Lavrov's visit to Norway in 2019, it was noted that “Traditionally, relations between Russia and Norway have been characterized by constructiveness and mutual understanding. However, after 2014, due to Oslo's accession to the anti-Russian sanctions measures

of Brussels and Washington, as well as the collapse of several areas of cooperation on their own initiative, their previous forward dynamics were significantly slowed down. Currently, they are developing unstably” (Comment by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s visit to Norway). This statement was also true for relations at the level of states in the Region.

However, the dialogue at the Regional Council level did not stop, although it was significantly complicated by sanctions and mutual mistrust on both sides. For example, previously, numerous Barents international projects in the Arkhangelsk region were reduced to two in 2019 (Passport of the cultural life of the Arkhangelsk region 2019). Russia's regions have ceased to be an open platform for international cultural cooperation, at least as it was at the pre-crisis level.

Summing up all five programs and the role of Russia in cultural cooperation in the Barents Region, the following conclusions can be drawn.

The first stage of cooperation in the field of culture fell in the pre-program period 1993-2003. During this time, bridges of friendship were built, and the first multilateral events were held. During this period, the role of Russia was passive in terms of organizing projects and holding events. However, the first decade was marked by many projects aimed at interaction with Russia and carried out at sites in Russia. For the first decade, Russian cultural diplomacy played a role not so much outside the country as, following the Kremlin's official documents, strived for openness on its own territory.

The second stage of the relationship fell on the first three Programs for the cultural development of the Region. This period can be called the most active period of cultural diplomacy on both sides. Russia ceased to be a recipient of all projects and grants but entered an equal partnership and became a part of main projects in the Barents region. However, the duality of cooperation between the Region is manifested in the actions of the Russian side. While regional cooperation, especially cross-border cooperation, developed and enjoyed success, government policy at the

Council level had different goals. However, this period was the most successful in terms of implementing multilateral projects with Russia's participation. Researchers also note this fact, but at the same time, Oldberg claims that restrictions exist and mostly they are due to the lack of funding (Oldberg 2014, 29-30). He also notes that there is another Russian fear of cultural exchange "...fear of Western politicization. Still, cultural, educational and scientific cooperation can in several ways be seen as a substitute for overt cooperation on democratic and human rights issues" (Oldberg 2014, 29-30).

The third stage began a little later than the adoption of the fourth cultural program, as it was associated with events in the international arena that influenced Russia's entire foreign cultural policy (Vlaeminck 2017, 62). It has become more "protective," and the number of international events has decreased significantly. Rhetoric has shifted from «open dialogue» to «preserving the integrity and values of Russia» (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2016). Despite the statements about readiness for cooperation, the state level of cultural policy is losing interest in the region. Moreover, Barents is not ready to create an identity. However, cross-border cooperation at the Regional Council level is quite popular and is developing even despite the shift in the country's global interests.

3. PROSPECTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL COOPERATION IN THE REGION IN THE POST-COVID ERA

The 2020 epidemic has made adjustments to all cultural programs that have taken place in the world. The pandemic of the new coronavirus and the strict anti-epidemic measures introduced by various countries have accelerated the transformation of world tourism and the cultural sector. According to a study by UNESCO and the International Council of Museums, more than 10% of museums may never reopen after the end of the pandemic. Cultural institutions worldwide suffered millions in financial losses, and hundreds of thousands of artists were left without jobs and opportunities for creative and professional development (UNESCO 2020, 6).

Recent research claims that “...when thinking about recovery for the cultural and creative sectors after the COVID-19 crisis, a return to the ‘old normal’ is not considered a desirable option” (Cultural and creative sectors in postCOVID-19 Europe 2021, 16). An analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on various cultural and creative projects underlines that some of the practices the sector is built on were neither healthy nor strong. Cultural cooperation needs a structural transformation towards more sustainable, equitable working methods. Many researchers do not believe that international cultural cooperation will return fully offline. “This is not the end of the world, but the end of a world” (Ibid. 5). Therefore, there is a need to revise all work on cultural projects globally.

The Barents region has suffered just like everyone else. The cultural cooperation program was either suspended or moved to the online space. Theatrical performances and literary meetings were held online, while the development of sports and the holding of the Barents Game 2020 were canceled (Barents Winter Games 2020). Also, all exchange projects and festivals were canceled, which most of all united the residents of the region and allowed their open communication. The Head of the Russian Ministry of Culture, Olga Lyubimova, believed that «Cultural

institutions have suffered and continue to incur colossal losses ... and it will take years to restore the industry» (Interfax 2020).

American diplomacy claims that “Diplomats joined the front lines of the crisis, with embassies struggling to maintain their diplomatic footprint, strengthen important bilateral cooperation, and provide consular services in a complex environment to stranded nationals” (Labott 2021, 5). They suppose that while “virtual public diplomacy can also be less organic and insightful” it is a future for a new age of diplomacy after the COVID-19 (Ibid. 6). “COVID-19 may change diplomacy dramatically — by helping it re-focus on what is really important” (Volker 2021). Traditional diplomacy faced a new reality that never happened before. Traditional ways of communicating and whole cultural diplomacy became useless in one day.

Many cross-border cultural alliances were at risk of losing what has already been achieved. Almost all of them had aimed to connect people through personal experience. Public Diplomacy is traditionally understood as a sovereign nation’s effort to inform and influence foreign publics through open communications. The issue is very recent, and there is no opportunity to refer to experts' experience because the first book on comprehending new cultural diplomacy in the post-COVID era is not issued yet (Alhashimi and Fiallo 2021).

There are two ways of overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. The first one is “Recovery” or “Back to normal.” It is based on the assumption that the cultural sector was healthy and strong before the COVID-19 crisis and that the severe impact on the sector is due to strict containment measures. It considers the “Back to Normal” as a reference point to design support schemes and legislative actions. It also applies a short-term approach that aims at getting the sector out of the crisis by building on the emergency measures taken during the crisis management phase (Cultural and creative sectors in postCOVID-19 Europe 2021, 53).

The second approach is the “Sustainability transition approach” or “Repair and prepare” (European Commission - Press release May 27, 2020). It assumes that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing unsustainability and that the strict containment measures were the last in a series of cumulative unsustainable situations. It considers the ‘New Normal’ as a part of a long-term transformation. This change is a starting point to guide and shape short-term action. The long-term approach is to make the sector crisis-resistant by substantively and sustainably addressing the root causes of unsustainability (Cultural and creative sectors in postCOVID-19 Europe 2021).

Some specialists in Russia claim that “The coronavirus pandemic has revolutionized digitalization instead of its evolutionary penetration and has changed all international cooperation sectors” (Bondareva 2021, 36). The opinion is correct, but there is no surprise in this revolution. It became the last resort in this crisis. For example, all international communication, including the Barents region’s was online during the pandemic (The Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation). This was the only chance to keep the connection and continue the work.

As has already been mentioned, almost all the projects from the Cultural Program 2019-2023 were stopped or canceled in 2020. Regional cultural communication severed more than state one. First of all, that happened because a significant number of projects at this level were cross-border and demanded the presence of its participants. More than that, in Russia's case, most of the communication in the current situation is on a regional level. Consequently, there were many small projects offline that could never be transferred online, and the lack of big projects on the governmental level damaged the regional cooperation greatly.

According to the state’s authority, it seems that Russia chose the “Recovery” or “Back to normal” approach in Barents cultural communication. Even if this previous “normality” was shaky, this conclusion was formulated due to the hopes of literal “back to normal cooperation,” the return of the usual cultural activities to the region, and the absence of any official reports on the need for new cultural

cooperation in the Barents region. If there are no future lockdowns or major instability in the sector, this strategy may continue working.

There are also two main scenarios of the future Russian role in the Barents region after the pandemic, even applying the “Back to normal” approach. The first one can be called realistic. As has already been mentioned, Russian cultural policy is highly vulnerable due to the political situation. The year 2014 was a beginning of such a situation. After Donbas and the Crimea crisis, many European countries declared sanctions against Russia. The Barents states were included in that list. The cultural sector or cultural diplomacy was not at stake, but the European sanctions influenced economic and military sectors that led to mistrust in other cooperation sectors (Comment by the Information and Press Department on Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov’s visit to Norway October 24, 2019). In response to that, Russia started cultural, economic, and political separations from the rest of the West. The annual results of Barents Cultural programs since 2016 show that separation. The intergovernmental level, at least in the cultural sector, was almost inactive; however, at the regional level, the connection remained strong but fewer projects with the lesser scope were put into practice. Now some problems cannot be resolved culturally. For example, in 2014, there was a joint musical festival on Spitsbergen (“Grumant” - the first music festival in Svalbard August 13, 2014). Barents states supposed it a new forum for communication and a successful way of resolving problems through cultural diplomacy. Unfortunately, in 2020 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation claimed that Norway refused Russia its right to use the island, and Norway accused Russia of violation of the agreement 1920 (Ignatiev 2020). There are no more cultural festivals that can solve such a delicate problem.

The realistic scenario suggests that Russia is perceived as a threat in the Barents region. Hence the number of projects and open communication will decline. On the one hand, the reason is mistrust and the lack of joint forces in intergovernmental projects. On the other hand, it is the Russian choice. Answering

the European threat, as it is perceived in Russia, the state must protect its borders and citizens. Cultural influence from “hostile” states is highly unwelcome. This can be seen in the latest official security documents and a new cultural policy. The current Barents Cultural Program is mainly about forming a Barents identity, but according to Russian officials and programs, it has no desire to form one. Besides the official ones, the identity is a threat to the state's cultural heritage and politics. So, Russia's current position in the Barents region is cautious, and it will continue to be such.

According to this scenario, there will be more tensions on the border. There will be less financing to the cultural sector due to the pandemic and the rise of Russia's protectionist measures. The BEAC level (governmental) will continue to slow down cultural communication, whereas the BRC (regional level) will be more successful due to the strong connections and mutual cross-border interests. Unfortunately, Russian regions are highly dependent on governmental financing. That is why it will be problematic to continue the cooperation at the same qualitative level if Russia changes the Barents region's governmental approach.

The optimistic scenario also applies the “Back to normal” paradigm. In this case, Russia loosens restrictions and turns toward the community and its ideals. This case reminds the uprising of cultural diplomacy and openness of the first Cultural programs. The optimistic scenario is less probable nowadays. The problems are so deep that there is almost no chance that they will be solved soon. There are no preconditions on the official level to choose this approach. The only probability rests on the fact that Russia is highly dependent on other actors in the field of exploration and usage of Arctic resources. It can shift the openness a little, and Russia will again hope to receive profits through cultural diplomacy.

To sum up, the COVID-19 crisis has damaged the international cultural sector a lot. Much cross-border cooperation was at stake. It happened because the sector was not ready for the extreme measures which were applied. The regional level

cooperation was a mainly person-to-person type, and it was impossible to relocate it online.

There are now two approaches for the cultural communication sector. The one is the returning of the previous normality and the usage of pre-COVID collaboration. The second is to evaluate the “new normality” of the COVID crisis and find new communication methods. According to the officials in the Barents region, Russia chose the first approach and hopes to use usual diplomacy channels as soon as possible.

There are also two scenarios for the role of Russia in cultural communication in the post-COVID Barents region. Unfortunately, the optimistic one is not achievable soon. Russia declared that maintaining peace in the Arctic is the most important nowadays, so it continues to maintain it. The position now is a status quo, but the scenarios show that the status quo can be positive or negative. Currently, it is a status quo with a negative attitude. Consequently, the role of Russia in cultural communication in the Barents region will decline and be more self-oriented.

4. CONCLUSION

In this study, the aim was to analyze Russia's role in cultural cooperation in the Barents region. In conclusion of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn based on the set goals and objectives.

First, it became clear during the study that in order to understand the meaning of the cultural cooperation for Russia, it is important to determine what is the basis for Russia's foreign cultural policy. Thus, Russia's foreign cultural policy is declared in Foreign policy concepts of the Russian Federation, although there are no specific documents that fully observe the problem and define a path for Russian cultural policy. It is essential to understand that almost all international cultural communication is somehow connected to the government, and consequently, the main representative of the culture internationally is the government itself.

International cultural cooperation is vital for the state, but it is definitely not the priority. Cultural diplomacy is the primary tool of communication in this sector, but unfortunately, it is mainly the way of simple representation rather than building a good image of the state that works for its reputation.

At the beginning of the XXI century, scholars started using the term “soft power” according to the Russian cultural policy without an explicit use of this term. Unfortunately, it became clear that the understanding of “soft power” differs from the common one. Soft power is used not for external influence and making a good image but for maintaining national interests secured. As the BEAR situation shows, Russian governmental cultural policy has transformed from the openness of opinions and exchange of culture in the 90s to the deep concern of the use of soft power other than for national interests in the mid-10s.

During the research, I found out that the Barents Euro-Arctic Region relations are not regulated by any additional documents on a culture other than the Concepts. The disappearance of mentioning the BEAR/BEAC from the Concepts 2016 shows the decline of interest in the region on a governmental level, although one of the

primary purposes of creating this type of communication in 1993 was the desire to have a platform for a dialogue with Russia. The priorities have changed, and now the one can see the decline of interest in that platform in Russia, at least in the case of culture.

The role of Russia in cultural communication in the Barents region changed several times. Three periods were defined. From 1993 to approximately 2003 it was the period of active participation in all kinds of programs, high level of trust from Russia towards the west partners, the will of forming the region together, and the lack of finance to organize any activities. The projects were multicultural and mostly designed for the international participation. Because of the language barrier they were about dancing, theater, and music.

The second one lasted almost a decade and ended with the Russian change of the course after the Ukrainian crisis. Russia took part in the Barents region's programs at two levels: state and regional, and in 2003-2015 and both the state and the regions were very active and had many expectations on the cultural communication. This decade Russia became a full event organizer and tried to bring a Russian point of view in the cultural cooperation in the Region. At this stage, the role of Russia was transitional, and during this period, Russia could continue the open dialog or turn towards the protection of its national interests. The projects there reflected the Russian will to form a cooperation on the international terms. During this period many Russian government workers participated in the BEAR projects financed by the EU. The essence of the projects organized by Russia were mostly connected to the common values and ideas. The biggest joint project was also implemented during this stage by all the states.

The third period started after 2016 (approximately in 2016) and continues to this day. Since 2014 at the state level, Russia loses interest in close cooperation in the field of culture among the BEAR countries. It promotes and protects its national interests. Not the dialog and multiculturalism but maintaining peace and status quo in the Arctic region becomes Russia's central issue. The regions are more interested

in continuing cooperation; however, their ties are mainly bilateral and cross-border. A change in the state policy vector significantly affects the openness of borders, the number of festivals, and involvement in expensive large-scale projects. The remained projects were mostly bilateral, almost all leadership programs were closed, and the exchange became complicated.

Recent events such as COVID-19 did not change the main vector of communication in the Barents region. The realistic scenario shows that culture is connected to the political situation, and there is little chance that it will change soon. The coronavirus accelerated the gap in Russian interests in cultural communication in the Barents region. There is a possibility that the cultural relations will return in a short way and without governmental support.

To sum up, it was established that the role of Russia in the cultural cooperation in the Barents Euro-Arctic Region changed several times. The state completed the way from the recipient of projects and finance to the organizer of events and a fully involved member of the cooperation. Only the change of national interests and a political crisis almost stopped that evolution. More than that, this type of cooperation is still important for the Russian regions and unlikely to end. Nevertheless, lack of regional financial resources and a dependence on the state's opinion cannot let the cultural dialogue be as open as possible.

The study showed that Russia never wanted a full culture-based integration in the region, but it wanted to be noticed and respected. Currently, its ideas differ from the latest Cultural program, and the changes in politics have led to the loss of interest in cultural communication at the state level. Mutual trust is essential for the implementation of cultural programs. Let us hope that one day it will return, and cultural cooperation will be in demand at all levels.

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